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Plastic

Tammy lives in filth.

Every day she wakes at 5:30 am. It takes a long time for her to rat her hair and apply layer after layer of foundation and cover-up and blue eyeliner and blush and rouge and mascara and lipstick and lip- liner and then she puts in fifteen of her earrings: six in the right ear and nine in the left.

She began piercing her ears when she was thirteen, which was the age her mother said she could start piercing her ears, and she hasn't stopped in the three years since. She gets together with her girlfriends -- Rhonda, Linda, Kerri-Ann, Joy -- and they perform the ritual, usually after somebody's boyfriend left one for the other or maybe the whole group altogether, which is the most unfortunate. Right now there is a group of boys who hang out with the girls during school at Tarradiddle High. This group of boys is like a reservoir from which the five girls pick their prospective lovers, friends, prom dates and so on and so forth.

Joy began dating Leon who was best friends with Craig, so Craig began seeing Rhonda but that's radically different from dating because *seeing* people means you can still *see* other people, and that's exactly what Rhonda did, so Craig got mad and started *going out* with Kerri-Ann, which is much more serious than just *dating* because *going out* means that you are stuck that way for life or at least until something comes along to disrupt things, which is exactly what happened when Kerri-Ann's old boyfriend, Ronnie, pulled up on his brand new Honda Rebel 250. She left Craig for good.

Fortunately, Ronnie is a nice enough guy and helped Craig fix up his Honda Trail 90 and cut his hair short in front and long in back and that was enough for Linda to fall madly in love with Craig for almost three whole weeks, which is a considerable amount of time for a couple of kids from Tarradiddle in the tenth grade.

Joy and Leon had broken up awhile ago by this point in time, but they still went to homecoming together, and they would still make out in Rhonda's backyard after school even though Leon and Linda were *seeing* each other. Linda thought it was cute that both of their names started with *L* and she would roll them off of her tongue all day long:

- Leon Loves Linda
- Linda Loves Leon
- Leon Loves Linda
- Linda Loves Leon

This habit of Linda's was the main excuse Leon gave to Rhonda whenever she became the object of his affection in the backyard or at the movies or at homecoming or during lunch or whenever he felt he could talk her into going along with it.

Tammy, on occasion, has had over twenty seperate holes in her ears. During sleepovers she and her friends would sneak out into the kitchen, grab a cupful of ice and a potato, and then sit up until morning putting holes in each other's ears.

Linda felt comfortable letting Tammy pierce the cartilage:

- Okay, it's not my fault if your face gets paralyzed, okay?
 - Damn, Tammy, don't you think I trust you?
- No, yeah, I mean I know you trust me, but I've heard that sometimes it makes your face paralyzed.
 - Well, then, just don't do that, okay? Damn, what do y'all think?

Kerri-Ann and Rhonda were looking at Tammy's *Playgirl* that she had stolen out of her brother's room.

- You got this out of your brother's room, Tammy?
 - Wow, he's a weirdo, huh?
- My brother's okay...
 - Hello, girl, he looks at naked men.
- So?
 - 'So?' So you know what that means.
 - Tammy's brother's a faggot.
- You guys, shut up Shit, y'all act like you ain't never seen a faggot before.
 - Just at your house.
 - Tammy, my ear's numb enough I think.
- Just a sec.
 - You don't think it'll paralyze my face do you?
 - Who cares if it paralyzes your face, just hold your mouth open like this
- Rhonda makes an 'O' with her mouth.
 - Why?
 - Cuz this guy wants *you*, Linda.

And Rhonda holds up a beefcake centerfold, penis flaccid in his big, muscular hands

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Tammy dated from the reservoir of high school boys until fall of her tenth grade year. Linda turned sixteen just after school started and her father, Gilbert Spratt, the deal man, who was incredibly rich and powerful in Tarradiddle (powerful enough that he leased the mayor, Trimbull Karstenicz, who worked part-time as a foreman on a construction crew, the minister, the doctor, the lawyer and the businessman in Tarradiddle cars with luxury interiors and electric amenities), bought her a car.

The first Friday night of their driving lives passed uneventfully until they pulled around the back of Tarradiddle Technical University and found a group of older kids huddled around a keg, sitting like a fat, old man in the back of an old Chevy pickup. The pickup and the keg shell belonged to Lucas T. McBride, the toughest, lovinest, rockin and rollinest hunk of man in all of Tarradiddle, and Tammy fell in love immediately. With all three of them.

That night Tammy had all twenty-one earrings in. Gold plate, cheap silver, and cubic zirconians all nestled snugly in her swollen pink-green ears, glisten in the floodlights of the parking lot. Lucas noticed and said

-- This here looks infected

from behind her seat on the tailgate

where she nursed a sixteen ounce cup of Bud Light. She shivered a little, not because it ever got cold at night in Tarradiddle, but because of his breath so close to the back of her neck.

-- I'm Lucas. What's your name?

-- Tammy.

-- Well, Tammy, that's just gonna grow out of there anyway.

Lucas gently touched the uppermost earring -- a bit of green glass in a gold plated piercing stud. Tammy wouldn't let anybody pierce her through the cartilage, so a tiny strip of skin bulged on the outer edge of her ear, straining to hold in the metal.

-- Whaddaya mean it's going to grow out?

-- You pierce something like that, with just a little skin on the outside, and it's just gonna grow out, babe. I oughta know.

-- You don't have any earrings

-- No, but look at this

Lucas pulled up his black Megadeth t-shirt to reveal a deformed left nipple

-- See. That grew out in just a few weeks

-- You pierced your nipple?

-- Oh, yeah. That's what they do out in LA and stuff. That's what all the real rockers do, y'know, none of that faggoty new wave right ear shit.

-- I never seen that.

-- Well, like I say, they grow out.

Lucas sat down next to her on the tailgate.

- You should take a few of these out.
- Think so?
- Yeah, my cousin had a lot of earrings. How many you got?
- Twenty-one.
- Julie, my cousin, had about that many and her ears got all infected real bad. Turned all green and yellow, and pus just oozed all over and stuff, but she wouldn't take 'em out. Pretty soon she had to go to the doctor and get a shot it got so bad.
- What happened to her?
- Well, her ear, I don't remember which one, it got all floppy. Y'know, like a dog ear? And now it just sort of hangs there, all floppy and stuff, and they say they can't do anything about it. Don't matter, though, she's a dog anyway.
- Oh my God, that's so gross.
- Yeah, it was pretty bad. So you might think about taking some of those out, sure would be a shame if your pretty little ears got all floppy. Tammy shivered again.
- You cold? Here, you can wear my jacket.

Lucas reached back into the truck bed to retrieve his black denim jacket from where it sat upon the sleeping bag that made its home just in front of the wheel-well for use in emergencies or drive-ins. Lucas had bought a t-shirt at the 1987 Monsters of Rock tour and decided that the cartoony version of Godzilla driving a monster truck was so cool it should be on the back of his jacket, so he cut out the front of the shirt to the size of that perfect, flat field of denim and stapled it on over the Ratt t-shirt he had stapled on over the Metallica t-shirt he had stapled on over the WASP t-shirt he had stapled on over the AC/DC t-shirt he had stapled on over the Van Halen stencil he had spraypainted on. All of this made it a heavy jacket, and Tammy could feel every ounce of it weigh on her shoulders when Lucas placed it there. It smelled of oil, beer, cigarettes and faint perfume around the collar.

- Who you here with?
- My friend, Linda.
- Where is she?
- I don't know.

Tammy looked around the parking lot, but Linda's car was gone. Most of the cars were gone, and the remaining vehicles had veiled themselves with fogged windows and radio white noise for a deeper sense of privacy.

- Looks like you need a ride home. I'll take you.
- Thanks. That's real nice of you.
- No sweat, babe.

Lucas escorted her to the passenger door, and, after securing the keg in the back, joined her in the cab. They drove to Tammy's house with Yngwie J. Malmsteen blaring from the tinny speaker in the dash.

- Because Malmsteen is a genius. Y'know, I play guitar, too.

and Lucas' hand situated squarely on Tammy's knee. Lucas drove slowly, like he was hiding something, and she couldn't take her eyes off him. He had light brown hair, feathered across the top and curly and long in back. His biceps bulged every time he turned the wheel below the rolled up sleeves of his tight t-shirt. He wore tight jeans with bleach spots all over them (one right on the bulge in his crotch just like Robert Plant) and rips in the knees. He talked about rock and roll and knew the names of so many bands. He told Tammy about his guitar, his band, his plans to fix up this old truck. When they rumbled to a stop in front of Tammy's driveway she asked

-- Am I gonna see you again?

Then he kissed her on the mouth, but no tongue.

-- You should lose some of the earrings, babe.

Tammy smiles and nods.

-- What'd you pierce your nipple with?

-- Safety pin.

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The Saturday after she met Lucas Tammy slept in until 2:00 in the afternoon, and only woke then because Linda called to make sure she got home alright.

-- What the hell happened to you?

-- Do you remember that guy, Chuck?

-- No

-- Well, there was this guy, Chuck, there, and he and I were sitting in the car listening to the radio and stuff and then he said he knew this really cool place that we could go check out.

-- What place?

-- I don't know We never got there He was telling me to go on all these backroads and stuff, y'know out past Coleman's and up into the hills, but I think he was too drunk to know where he was going and then he puked.

-- Where?

-- All over. He kept leaning over and kissing my neck, and you know I was telling him to quit and all, and then he put my hand on his dick.

-- He pulled it out?

-- No, but his pants were tight, honey.

-- How big was it?

-- Huge

-- Okay, go on.

-- Yeah, so we were just driving along and I was giving him a handjob and all and then all of a sudden he just puked.

-- In the car?

-- Yeah, all over the dash mostly, but he got some on his dick and on my hand and everything. It was so gross, hon, I can't even begin to tell you. He

kind of burped, then gurgled, then made this really weird face, I dunno, it was just gross. And then he just took off his shirt and started sopping it up and he was cryin' and all and sayin' how he was so sorry this and so sorry that and how he didn't usually puke and stuff.

-- So what'd you do?

-- I told my dad this morning that you got a bad milkshake at A&W and got sick, so he feels sorry for you and all. I just wanted to make sure if you come over and he asks you about it you know what he's talking about. He made Hank at the dealership clean it all up this morning. So if he asks, you got sick in the car last night, 'kay?

-- 'Kay.

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5:30am

Tammy gets up to begin her routine of cosmetic application and general primping. She applies various creams and powders to cover up the daily eruption of irritated pores as well as the rotting corpses of those pores that had become irritated before. Her hair, while generally wrangled into a scrunchie or banana clip on *staying home* days, is then structured and supported with liberal amounts of AquaNet and Stiff Stuff to form an always impressive flip of curled bangs that rises up from the ratted mess below. She ties a knot in her oversized t-shirt just above her hip so you can see the Wrangler tag on her back pocket.

6:00am

In the upstairs bedroom, Darryl Lipnick, Tammy's father, lies heavy next to his wife, Cheryl. The alarm buzzes. At six am, before Darryl has begun his shower, he is already soaked, and the bed where he slept smells musty, sweet, metallic.

6:20am

Darryl enters the kitchen where Tammy fixes breakfast, wiping the rolled up arm of his unbuttoned pale yellow shirt across his forehead. The sweat is already beginning to soak through the armpits. Darryl stands next to the table rolling his sleeves down and buttoning them.

-- You iron this shirt?

-- I iron all the shirts, daddy.

-- This one's wrinkled.

-- Cuz you roll up your sleeves.

-- Yeah, well, you be sure to iron all my work shirts extra good, y'hear?

-- Here's breakfast.

Tammy sets eggs, sausage, toast in front of him at the table.

-- Yolks are hard.

Tammy is thinking of Lucas McBride. She's decided he must work out after replaying the sight of his deformed left nipple. In that instant she saw his chiseled chest and washboard stomach, and just a little line of hair leading below his belt.

-- I said, These yolks are hard.

-- Oh, sorry.

7:04am

Tammy knocks gently on her older brother's door. Bruce graduated high school the year before but still lives at home. He has a job, or at least he has money most of the time, and is gone a lot of the time, sometimes for days or weeks on end. It's during these absences that Tammy sneaks in to steal his Playgirls, borrow his tapes and lay in his bed. Bruce's room is the nicest smelling room in the house. Tammy wonders where Bruce gets the time to keep his room so clean.

-- Yeah?

-- You up yet?

-- Come in.

-- I wanted to give you back your Smiths tape.

-- Thanks. You like it?

-- Yeah, it was cool.

Bruce hadn't slept in his bed. He sits at his Amiga 500.

-- You just get home?

-- Awhile ago. You were in the shower.

-- Where'd ya go last night?

-- Out with a friend. Why?

-- Just wonderin'.

7:23am

School. Tammy gets off the bus in the circle behind the school, and then walks around front where she sits in her spot on the planter that runs the length of the building. It's the same spot she sat in with all of her friends their first day in the tenth grade (as far away as you can get from the front doors) and, until the seniors graduate and the juniors vacate their spot for the seniors' spot (on the front steps), there is nowhere else for sophomores to sit before school.

Tammy sits waiting for everybody else to show up, but when she looks up towards the Kwik-Mart she notices that Lucas McBride is sitting in his truck. He is watching her. He is smiling at her. He is waving at her. He is beckoning her over to him. He is gorgeous.

Tammy crosses the street

-- Hi.

-- You sure look pretty today. How 'bout you come on over and see my apartment.

-- I got school.

-- So do I, but it's not stoppin' me. You never skipped school before?

-- Yeah, I've skipped before.

-- Then let's go.

Tammy gets into the old Chevy. Motley Crue blares on the cheap speakers so loud she can barely hear Lucas telling her about the kegger they had at the park last night, about how some guy named Bo tossed a snapping turtle to some other guy named Mike and it bit him on the dick because Mike had decided to strip off all his clothes and Bo doesn't like to see other guys naked.

-- I mean, he really gets pissed off about that faggot shit, y'know.

Then

Chuck threw up all over some girl, but she was so drunk she just peeled off her shirt and rinsed the rest of the puke off with beer. Lucas continues his stories of booze and naked men and Vince Neil continues to belt out heartfelt songs about GIRLS GIRLS GIRLS and long legs and burgundy lips. Tammy leans into the fuzzy seat cover and takes it all in. They pull into a gravel drive.

-- This is it, baby. Whaddaya think?

Tammy looks across the yard to the house.

-- This whole place yours?

-- Nah. I live back here. That house belongs to Mr. Karstenicz. He's a contractor.

-- Oh, yeah, I think I seen those signs before.

-- Yeah. Helluva guy. Lets me live back here cheap while I'm in school.

-- So this is your apartment?

They are standing at the door of the small building behind the much larger house.

-- Sure is . C'mon in, baby.

The first thing that comes to Tammy's mind upon entering the apartment is hamburger because the smell of fried meat is almost overwhelming, especially when mixed with the lingering sweetness of macaroni and cheese and Stetson cologne.

The apartment is a studio, kitchen to the left, living/sleeping area to the right and a bathroom in the rear middle. There are grease stains all over the wall above the stove, and dishes are overflowing the sink. Empty macaroni boxes and half-eaten tv dinners belch out of the garbage. A half eaten pizza sits, still in its box, on the coffee table in the living area which basically consists of a La-Z-Boy, the aforementioned coffee table, and an AudioVox car stereo system rebuilt and customized for home entertainment. The bed is positioned for optimized aural pleasure.

-- This is all yours, huh?

-- Yes ma'am. Whaddaya think?

-- Where's your guitar?

--I keep it over in the shop at school. We use it for practice.

-- You have a band, right?

-- Yeah, yeah, I'm the guitarist and singer.

- What's it called again?
 -- Vortexx right now, but we were thinking about changing it.
 -- Vortexx, huh?
 -- Yeah, cool, huh? Hey, you want some Mad Dog?

Lucas jumps up from his spot on the bed and goes to the fridge.

-- Some what?

Tammy is casually glancing through the pile of mail cluttering the coffee table. There are a half dozen Columbia House envelopes, of which only a couple are opened. They are addressed to Lucas McBride, Luke Breed, L Brighton, LM Busker, Lance McBain, and Larry Brian at apartments one through six. Lucas comes back from the kitchen with two glasses of purple something.

- Some Mad Dog, y'know MD 20/20.
 -- I dunno.
 -- C'mon, it's grape.

And he pushes the glass in front of her.

-- Just have a few sips. You can sit over here, if you want.

And he sits on the edge of the bed.

Tammy takes the glass and sits down.

- What's all this?
 -- Oh, that stuff's from Columbia House, y'know the tape club.
 -- Yeah, but who're all these other people?
 -- That's how ya get free tapes. See, you just hafta fill out the little card you get from magazines, and then you fill it out, right, with all the things they wanna know and what tapes you want, and then you put a fake name in the box. It's easy.
 -- Don't you get caught?
 -- Naw. You gotta make the names kinda like yours so the mailman just thinks they screwed up, y'know, Columbia House.
 -- Does that work with other stuff?
 -- What, like credit cards and shit? Sometimes. They ain't too careful. They got insurance to cover stuff like that. Everybody's got insurance these days, right?
 -- I ain't got insurance.
 -- Whaddaya mean? You don't drive.
 -- Yeah, but my daddy don't believe in insurance. He says we don't need to pay for something that might happen. Says that it ain't smart to pay just cuz something might happen. In fact, he always says
 -- Ain't nobody payin' me cuz I *might* win the lottery, right?

so he figures we can all just go to the emergency room or whatever and he just gives 'em a credit card.

-- They sent me a credit card.

My daddy's got all kinds of credit cards. He says that credit cards are the way to go. He says he's gonna get more credit cards. One time my daddy took us all out to Coleman's and my brother, he was a lot littler back then, went in and found this gum or some candy or something and daddy came in and found him and told him he'd hafta go. Then he started bawling and stuff so my daddy had to buy him the candy or whatever to get him to shut up, and my mom, she gets bad headaches, like real bad migraines, and so then she had to go and lie down and daddy had to go to get her some Tylenol or something and then he bought us some food on the way home cuz momma really liked french fries and shakes. And he paid for all that with his credit card. My daddy's got all kinds of credit cards He's got cards that only work at certain stores and cards for getting gas and cards for ordering stuff off the TV and normal cards like you see on commercials and then some of those weird cards you see commercials for but have never heard of. He says that's his plan. He's gonna charge up the whole bunch of them. I guess that's a lot of money, cuz he hasn't done it yet, but he says he's gonna charge up all of them and then he's got some plan worked out to file bankruptcy or something like that, but I guess that's not so bad after all cuz he says then they'll just erase his debts and he'll just hafta wait a little while before he can get more credit cards. But they can't fire him or nothing and he's gonna get all the stuff he really wants and not ever hafta pay for it. He says that's why he loves his plastic so much, cuz it's better than money and it's free.

Yeah, they sent me something and it said guaranteed credit card for college students and so I said well, what the hell, and sent it in and now I got this credit card with like a million dollar limit or something. I don't remember how much exactly, but it's a lot. I'm gonna use it when I head to LA cuz that's where I need to be. That's where all the action is, y'know, LA with the Whisky and all that stuff. Me and my band are gonna go and we will rock LA like it ain't never been rocked before. We got this new cover of *Shout at the Devil* all worked out and it's so cool. But really, we aren't limited to Motley Crue covers. We do some Def Leppard for the pussies and stuff. Oh, man, I almost forgot to tell you, but I learned *Iron Man* the other day. I just figured it out, y'know. That's how I usually do it, just sit down with the tape and figure the shit out and then I can play it. Plus, I'm versatile, y'know. I can play some Zep and Blue Oyster Cult and stuff, even though that's a little old. I like the harder stuff, y'know Like *Hot for Teacher* or *Panama*. I like David Lee Roth a lot. I think Sammy Hagar is a fag and Van Halen fucked up. Plus David Lee Roth got Steve Vai to play guitar and that's just fucking cool. So anyway, when I decide to, when I feel the time is right, y'know, I'm gonna just bust out of this little shithole and make it big. I figure I'll truck out to LA, maybe meet some dudes on the way who want to be in the most hardcore rockin' metal band of the century, and then make it big. I figure I could last like some six months to a year livin' off the plastic, y'know, free money

Tammy swills the last of her wine. Lucas has already finished his and gets up for refills. This time he abandons the cups and returns with the half-empty bottle.

Lucas leans over to hit play on the stereo. Dokken creeps out of the hanging car speakers.

-- What if I told you about how pretty you are? What if I told you I think I care about you a lot?

-- Um...

-- What if I kissed you?

And there it is, a kiss on the lips (with tongue). Lucas pushes Tammy back onto the bed and she gives in to his pressure. He puts his hand under her shirt and first fumbles with the back of her bra.

-- It hooks in front.

-- Oh, okay.

And then the front of her bra, until it comes open. He caresses her small breasts for a short moment before jamming his hand into her tight tight tight Wranglers to frantically search for that magic spot.

-- Oh, baby, you're so pretty.

-- Lucas...

-- Baby, I need you baby, I want you.

He pulls open the button on her jeans and unzips them to reveal her cotton panties with pink and lavender blossoms.

-- Uhh...

-- C'mon baby, don't make me wait, you know I care about you.

-- But

He is pushing her jeans and panties down

-- Baby, but I love you.

And then the door flies open.

-- LUCAS T. McBRIDE!

Lucas turned over and Tammy sees a woman standing in the doorway. She wears a short, silk robe, and carries a bottle of wine and two glasses.

-- Hon, er, I mean, Mrs. Miller, what're you doing here?

-- What the hell is *she* doing here?

-- This is, uh, just a friend.

Tammy scrambles to pull her pants back up.

-- A friend? Looks more like a little slut if you ask me.

And put her bra right.

-- She was just leaving, right?

-- I guess.

-- Good! Get that little tramp off my property.

-- Yes, Ma'am.

- I told you about havin' girls over.
- Yes, Ma'am.
- And I don't want to see this bitch around here again.
- Yes, Ma'am.

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Tammy's house needs paint, but Darryl says he's going to get siding on his Sears card whenever anybody asks him about it. Tammy lies on her back in the front yard memorizing the cracks in the paint. She thinks of piercing and plastic.

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Lucas McBride begins his afternoon ritual by drinking a Silver Bullet behind the auto shop at TTU with his friends Steve and Chuck.

- Man there ain't shit to do in this town anymore, Lucas.
- Shit, Chuck, there's a whole lotta beer. We just gotta go and get it and then drink it.
- Yeah, lets go get a keg and have a bust over at the lake.
- We did that last night.
- So. Let's do it again.

The three hop into the front of Lucas' truck. Megadeth blasts at them from the Sparkomatic sound system.

- Look, man, you gotta take this out.
- What the fuck, man, this is Megadeth.
- I hate Megadeth.
- Why?
- Dave Mustaine, man, he's a dick.
- He's not that bad.
- They kicked him out of Metallica didn't they? That's enough for me. If James Hetfield thinks he's a dick, then I think he's a dick, too.
- Shit, James Hetfield is the dick, man.
- Fuck You!
- Look, here's some Maiden.

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The phone rings and Tammy answers.

- Tammy, it's Linda. Where were you today?
- With Lucas.
- No way.
- Way.
- So what'd you do?
- Talked mostly.
- Bullshit! I call bullshit.

- Well, we kissed.
- No way!
- I'm serious.
- Was it good?
- It was okay.
- Did he feel you up?
- Yeah, I guess.
- So what, are you guys gonna do it?
- I don't know.
- How come you didn't do it today?
- His landlord's wife busted in.
- No way. Were you naked?
- Not really.
- Not really? Hold on, I gotta get Rhonda on three way, she'll die.

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- See, Chuck, it's all right here man.
- Whaddaya mean?
- Look, here's David Lee Roth's first solo album. He called it EAT THE RICH right? So then you have Van Halen, who kicked out David Lee Roth and got Sammy Hagar.
- Pussy
- Absolutely, but anyway they got him and the first album they put out with him is called OU812.
- I don't get it.
- Jeezus, you idiot. It's so simple. Fuck, why didn't I figure that out?
- You just gotta think about it.
- Oh!
- See, it's pretty obvious.
- So what's it mean then?
- It's like a slam, y'know. Sammy Hagar thinks he's bad and shit, so he's gonna make fun of David Lee Roth, y'know?
- That's fucked up, man.
- Yeah, that's fucked up.
- We're here What kind of beer you guys want?

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- Okay, Rhonda's on, too.
- Hey, girl.
- Hi, Tammy.
- I told her about what happened today.
- You *told* her already?
- I didn't think you'd mind Besides, I didn't wanna hafta listen to the whole thing all over again.

- It's okay. I can't believe his landlord's wife walked in.
- And Tammy was naked.
- Not all the way.
 - So what, Tammy, are you gonna do it with him or what?
- I dunno.
 - I think you should.
- Why?
 - He's so cute, honey.
 - I'll bet he's got a huge package.
- Yeah.
 - Did you feel it?
- Kinda. Against my leg mostly.

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- Okay, I got some chicks to come.
- Damn, you were on the phone long enough.
 - Which chicks?
 - Those girls we met last week. At the fair.
- Where are we meetin' 'em?
 - The bay.

The primer gray Chevy truck coughs a little at first, then grumbles to the lake and the General Robert E. Lee memorial campground and bay, favored location for drinking beers and scamming chicks.

Lucas, Steve and Chuck arrive and proceed to:

- 1 Light cigarettes
- 2 Turn on KC overhead truck lights
- 3 Tap keg
- 4 Flip over RIDE THE LIGHTNING
- 5 Drink beer
- 6 Drink more beer
- 7 Drink another beer
- 8 Pop in TOO FAST FOR LOVE
- 9 Greet girls, offer beer

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- Y'think he'll ask you to prom?
- I dunno.
 - Of course not. You think he wants to go *back* for a prom.
- Yeah, he's kind've a rebel, y'know.
 - That's *so* cheesy.
- I think it's cute.
 - Me too. I want a rebel guy.

- You want any guy.
 -- He really likes me.
 -- I'm sure.
 -- No, he said so.
 -- D'you really like him?
 -- Yeah.
 -- So you gonna do it with 'im?
 -- I think so. Why not?
 -- When?
 -- I guess whenever he calls me.
 -- You think he'll call after today?
 -- Hope so.

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Chrissy, Melinda and Amy are seniors. They met Lucas, Steve and Chuck at the Tarradiddle County Fair where Lucas won Chrissy a pink stuffed bear, Steve won Melinda a mirrored Spuds McKenzie plaque and Chuck puked on the Scrambler. They all saw REO Speedwagon.

- Y'know I've missed you, baby.
 -- How come you haven't called?
 -- I just been busy practicin' with my band.
 -- These guys in your band?
 -- Naw. I've got some real talent backing me up. Y'know I was thinkin' about writin' a song for you, Chrissy. Y'know, to let you know how I feel about you and all.
 -- That's so sweet.

Kiss.

- Not as sweet as you. You want another beer?

Kiss Beer Kiss Fondle Kiss Beer Kiss Fondle
 Tap on the shoulder.

- What the? Chuck, what the fuck's wrong with you man? I'm busy here.
 -- Dude, Lucas, I just fuckin' went into the woods to puke.
 -- You always puke.
 -- Yeah. But I puked on Steve and Melinda.
 -- Shit, Chuck. What's wrong with you?
 -- I gotta weak stomach.
 -- Where'd they go?
 -- They took off. Well, Steve took off. Melinda's in the car. She wants you to take her home.

Lucas looks to Chrissy. The sight of Chuck's shirt is making her sick.

- Hey baby, just let them take your car. I'll get you home.
 -- I can't. It's my dad's.
 -- But we were gonna...

-- Not with that smell around. Call me next time you're rehearsing with your band.

She kisses Lucas deeply on the mouth, squeezing firmly on his package, then turns toward the car. Melinda and Amy are mortified, and the three drive off in the yellow camaro in silence. Lucas punches Chuck in the gut.

-- Fucking moron. What the hell are we gonna do now?

ooo

-- Tammy.

Tammy sits in her room working out polynomial roots for Algebra. Progress is slow.

-- Tammy.

The voice comes from outside her bedroom window. She pushes the curtain back and sees Lucas T. McBride standing in the darkness.

-- Lucas?

He approaches her window.

-- Tammy. Can you come out? I gotta tell you something.

She crawls out the window and he leads her to his truck, which is parked on the street in front of her house. They get in.

-- Baby, I gotta go. It's time.

-- Where to?

-- You know. LA. Gotta be a rock star.

-- Now? Why?

-- I dunno. Just feels right.

Kiss.

-- But what're you gonna do?

Kiss.

-- Get a band. Then some gigs. I got that credit, you know?

Kiss.

-- I could steal one of daddy's credit cards for you.

Kiss.

-- That sure is sweet of you, baby, but I'll use my own plastic this time.

Kiss.

-- Oh, Lucas, I wish you wouldn't go.

Kiss.

-- Me too, baby, but I can't stay here no more. Listen, I want to know how you feel about me. I mean, I love you, baby, and I want to come back for you, y'know, if you feel the same.

Kiss.

-- Of course. What should I do?

-- Tammy, I think we should do it. Y'know, to prove our love to each other.

Kiss.

-- D'you wanna?

-- Okay, Lucas.

Tammy lays back on the bench seat in Lucas' truck. "Aces High" is playing as Lucas undresses her and gets on top. She notices for the first time the gap in his teeth, the pimple on his nose, the roughness of his hands, that his breath smells like smoke and alcohol, and his shirt smells of Stetson and something else. She notices the rebel flag stapled in the top of the truck cab. The stars and bars. Rock and roll. It only takes a minute.

Lucas leaves her standing in her yard. There are stars above, and once the truck has pulled away Tammy can hear the paint peeling. Tammy sits there contemplating the feeling of Lucas inside of her. She thinks of the FOIL method – First, Outside, Inside, Last – and remembers she has homework. She sits down to finish her Algebra and thinks she'll probably see Lucas again tomorrow. Maybe she won't wear all of her earrings.